

# Ward 11 Newsletter

Council Member Scott Benson

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## Minneapolis Responds

*The City of Minneapolis emergency response to the Aug. 1, 2007 tragedy*

### United in tragedy

We grieve together for the victims and their families of the tragic collapse of the I-35W bridge on Aug. 1, 2007. The City of Minneapolis thanks the community for the support they have shown and extends its gratitude to our local, state and federal partners who assisted in our response effort and will help as we begin the recovery.

As the City's first-response rescue and recovery operation concludes and national media attention fades, there are months—even years—of work and sacrifice ahead. Patience will be required as we cope with the recovery and rebuild.

### A special thank you

The brave and tireless efforts our firefighters, police, and other emergency responders who put themselves in danger to help has touched us all. We are grateful for their hard work, and for that of staff from every City department who put in countless hours in response to the emergency.

### Minneapolis and the community responds

On Aug. 1, 2007 the first 911 call reporting the bridge collapse was received at 6:05 p.m. Emergency units were on the scene by 6:11 p.m. The City of Minneapolis activated its Emergency Operations Center at 6:20 p.m., and Minneapolis Fire established an Incident Command on the 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge, which runs alongside the I-35W bridge. In the hours that followed, responders worked tirelessly to rescue victims of the collapse. At the height of the response, more than 75 firefighting personnel and 75 law enforcement units were on the scene, including the collapse structure rescue and dive teams.

Mayor R.T. Rybak declared a local emergency Aug. 2, and the Minneapolis City Council approved a Declaration of Emergency to extend the Mayor's declaration indefinitely. The declaration is necessary to receive special disaster-related funding from State and Federal sources, and allows the City to operate within its emergency plan for as long as needed. Gov. Tim Pawlenty declared a peace-time emergency Aug. 2.

### What is happening at the disaster site?

Emergency response and recovery teams have been working round the clock at the site since Aug. 1. Dive teams led by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Of-

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**Important  
Phone Numbers  
Ward 11 office  
673-2211  
35W/Crosstown  
Construction  
Hotline  
1-866-743-6590**



workers have been working daily, with Minneapolis Police maintaining security around the perimeter of the site. All materials within the bridge area are part of an ongoing investigation into the collapse, which means the area is treated much like a crime scene. The National Transportation Safety Board is conducting the investigation, and will examine all facets of the collapse in that effort. On Aug. 5, Minneapolis Police tightened (made smaller) the perimeter of the secured area, which allowed for the opening of the Stone Arch Bridge.

In the coming days, the Minnesota Department of Transportation will become the lead agency in the clean-up of the site and the rebuild effort.

## **A request to the President**

This weekend Mayor Rybak delivered to President Bush a list of “preliminary requests” for federal assistance. The list includes: transit funding; a favorable decision on the City’s Urban Partnership Agreement grant submission; expedited approval of appropriations for the reconstruction of the bridge; other repairs to the 35W freeway; defraying costs of emergency and recovery efforts; completion of the full funding agreement for the Northstar Corridor; assessment and relief for adverse impacts to businesses large and small; and federal cabinet level involvement in the relief effort.

## **To pay your respects**

Minneapolis reopened the Stone Arch Bridge at 1 p.m., Sunday to give people a place to pay their respects. The pedestrian and bicycle bridge had been closed since shortly after the collapse.

People who wish to leave flowers or other memorials are asked to place them at Gold Medal Park, which overlooks the riverfront. The park is located between West River Parkway and Second Street South, at 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, next to the Guthrie Theater. Please note, people who wish to leave flowers or other memorials should place them on or near the viewing mound in the wood chips surrounding the park’s many trees, rather than on the grass.

## **Meeting transportation challenges**

The I-35W bridge played a major role in our area’s transportation network, and we recognize that new traffic patterns will emerge with the loss of that corridor. Public Works staff have been working hard to make modifications to our street system that allow traffic to flow as smoothly as possible. They include changing traffic signal timing, creating new turn lanes, and prohibiting some turns in Northeast to improve traffic flow across the Third Avenue and Hennepin Avenue bridges.

Several local streets in the collapse area are closed, including the 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue Bridge and sections of Second Street Southeast and West River Parkway. Many city streets and area freeways will see higher traffic as a result. You can find a list of streets and areas that we anticipate will have extra congestion and updates on road closures, as well as sign-up for automatic e-mail updates at [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/traffic](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/traffic).

Folks are encouraged, as much as is possible to take advantage of mass transit, car pooling, and bike routes to minimize traffic backups. Metro Transit has added extra buses to several routes to handle extra riders. For more information on transit, visit [www.metrotransit.org](http://www.metrotransit.org) or go to the Downtown Minneapolis Transportation Management Organization’s Web site at [www.mplstmo.org](http://www.mplstmo.org).

Public Works will continue to look for ways to improve the system, and anyone who wants to report observations or suggestions is encouraged to call 311 to provide their input.

To get the latest from MnDOT on freeway and entrance/exit ramp closures, visit [www.dot.state.mn.us](http://www.dot.state.mn.us).

## **Respect the security efforts**

Minneapolis Police ask that the public respect the security perimeter at the collapse site for your own safety, and to allow recovery personnel to do their work in the most effective way possible.

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## What you can do to help

Local organizations have created the “Minnesota Helps – Bridge Disaster Fund” to raise and direct contributions to where they are needed most. The fund will assist nonprofit organizations that help those most affected by the tragedy, including victims, families, and rescuers. To help, visit [www.MinnesotaHelps.org](http://www.MinnesotaHelps.org).

Anyone who witnessed the bridge collapse or was on the bridge is asked to call the National Transportation Safety Board witness line at 1-866-328-6347. Please note, this line is strictly for use by eyewitnesses.

## Stay informed

The bridge collapse recovery will take many months – even years. You can get the latest on recovery-related issues and traffic updates at [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/minneapolisresponds](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/minneapolisresponds) .

## Grants help folks in Minneapolis improve the environment

Minneapolis has awarded five grants of up to \$10,000 each to help local neighborhoods and organizations fund creative ways to engage residents to fight global warming.

The grants will not only energize Minneapolis groups, residents, and businesses to take action, but each of the efforts funded by the grants is a learning opportunity. The grant awardees and the City will all benefit by learning how different approaches work to engage the community to combat global climate change.

The grant awardees are:

**Seward/Longfellow Neighborhoods** The grant will be used to fund an “Inconvenient Truth” kickoff event, compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) distribution, Minneapolis Energy Challenge (MEC) promotion, “Ask me what I am doing about Climate Change” lawn signs, an electric lawn mower sharing program, and a programmable thermostat swap. Partners include the Higher Education Consortium for Urban Affairs, Welna II Hardware and Riverview Theater.

**Linden Hills Power and Light** The grant will help support 80 volunteers going door to door engaging citizens about MEC and energy conservation, CFL distribution and an interactive website/blog.

**Alliance for Sustainability** The grant will be used to target at least 50 block clubs to host different types of energy conservation block parties, providing kits, fact sheets, door hangers, DVDs, free CFLs, and guest speakers.

**Lyndale Neighborhood** The grant will help the neighborhood target homeowners, renters, and businesses through newspaper articles, ads, and workshops, to educate them about the MEC and energy conservation. The funding will also help buy down the cost of energy audits and provide matching grants for energy improvements.

**Bakken Museum** The grant will pay for a “Sustainable Electricity for the 21st Century” interactive exhibit and programming including MEC promotion, an energy conservation skit, ads, family activities and a Fall Energy Forum.

The grants are being awarded one month after the City awarded twenty smaller grants of up to \$1,000 to neighborhood groups, churches, non-profit organizations and parks to support their efforts to curb climate change.

For more information on these grants, visit the City’s Sustainability Initiatives Web site at [www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/sustainability).

## Monthly Community Meetings

<p><b>Field Regina Northrop</b>  <a href="http://FRNNG.org">FRNNG.org</a>  Meets Third Wednesday  6:30 PM  Lake Nokomis Presb.  46<sup>th</sup> St. &amp; 17<sup>th</sup> Ave</p>	<p><b>Hale Page Diamond Lake</b>  <a href="http://HPDL.org">HPDL.org</a>  Meets Fourth Monday  7:00 PM  Emmanuel United Methodist  5144 13<sup>th</sup> Ave S</p>	<p><b>Kingfield</b>  <a href="http://Kingfield.org">Kingfield.org</a>  Meets Second Wednesday  7:00 PM  Martin Luther King Park  4055 Nicollet Ave S</p>
<p><b>NENA</b>  <a href="http://Nokomiseast.org">Nokomiseast.org</a>  Meets Fourth Thursday  7:00 PM  NENA Office</p>	<p><b>Tangletown</b>  <a href="http://Tangletown.org">Tangletown.org</a>  Meets Third Monday  7:00 PM  Fuller Community Center  4800 Grand Ave S</p>	<p><b>Windom</b>  <a href="http://Windomcommunity.org">Windomcommunity.org</a>  Meets Second Thursday  7:00 PM  Windom Community Center  5821 Wentworth Ave S</p>

### Coffee With Scott

Whatever is on your mind, you can sit down with **Scott Benson** and talk about it over a cup of coffee, from **8:00 AM until 9:00 AM** at coffee shops around the 11th ward.

Aug 2	Betsy's Backporch 5447 Nicollet Ave S	Oct 4	Anodyne @ 43rd 4301 Nicollet Ave
Sept. 13	Sister's Sludge 4557 Bloomington	Nov 1	Mike's Corner Store 5601 Chicago Ave

## Open Appointments

The City of Minneapolis has more than 45 boards, commissions and advisory committees. These organizations, composed of citizen volunteers, advise the City on current issues and assist the City in policy development and administration of services.

[Minneapolis Empowerment Zone Governance Board \(closes 8/31/2007\)](#)

[Minneapolis Ethical Practices Board \(closes 8/10/2007\)](#)

For more information:

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/boards-and-commissions/open/>

## Electronic Newsletter

Council Member Benson publishes an electronic newsletter to keep you up to date on what is happening at City Hall. If you would like to receive this update, please e-mail me at [scott.benson@ci.minneapolis.mn.us](mailto:scott.benson@ci.minneapolis.mn.us) and put the words "E-mail Update" in the subject line.